

REMARKS

Claims 1-3, 6-14 and 17-27 are pending in this application. Claims 4, 5, 15 and 16 have been canceled without prejudice to or disclaimer of the subject matter therein. Of the claims that remain pending, claims 1-3, 6-14, 17, 18, 20-22 and 24-26 have been rejected. Claims 15, 19, 23 and 27 were objected to. Favorable reconsideration is respectfully requested in view of the following remarks.

The Applicant thanks the Examiner for the indication of allowable subject matter in paragraph 1 of the Office Action. The Applicant further thanks the Examiner for the claim suggestions in paragraph 2 of the Office Action. The claims and specification have been amended accordingly.

Claim 16 was objected to, and has been canceled.

Claim rejections

Section 112

Claims 1-3 and 6-11 were rejected under 35 USC 112, second paragraph as being indefinite. In accordance with the Examiner's suggestion, claim 1 has been amended to change the second recitation of "said upstream portion" to "said downstream portion." Claim 10 has been similarly amended. Withdrawal of the rejection of claims 1-3 and 6-11 under 35 USC 112, 2nd par. is therefore respectfully requested.

Claims 1-3, 6-11, 18 and 24 were rejected under 35 USC 112, first paragraph. Withdrawal of this rejection with respect to claims 1-3 and 6-11 is respectfully in view of the amendments to claims 1 and 10 noted above. Claims 18 and 24 have also been amended in accordance with the Examiner's suggestion. Withdrawal of the rejection of claims 18 and 24 under 35 USC 112, first paragraph is therefore respectfully requested.

Section 103

Claims 12-14, 16-18, 20-22 and 24-26 were rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Wilkinson et al. (US app. pub. no. 2003/0082432) in view of Cavalca et al. (US app. Pub. No 2003/0082432). Of these claims, claims 12-14, 17, 18, 20-22 and 24-26 remain pending.

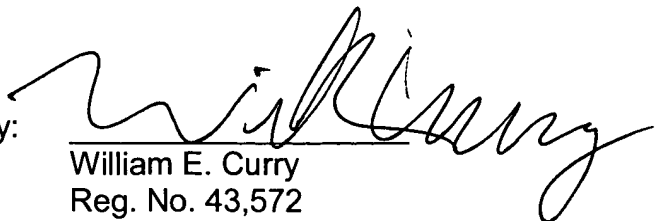
Withdrawal of the foregoing rejection is respectfully requested in view of the amendments set forth above to incorporate allowable subject matter into each of the pending claims. Specifically, claims 15, 19, 23 and 27 were indicated to contain allowable subject matter. Claim 12 has been amended to incorporate the recitations of claim 15, and claims 19, 23 and 27 have each been rewritten in independent form to include the recitations of claim 12. Therefore, claims 12, 19, 23 and 27 are all allowable. Each of claims 13, 14, 17, 18, 20-22 and 24-26 depends on one of claims 12, 19, 23 and 27. Therefore, the application as amended contains only allowable subject matter.

In light of the above discussion, Applicant respectfully submits that the present application is in all aspects in allowable condition, and earnestly solicits favorable reconsideration and early issuance of a Notice of Allowance.

The Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at (202) 220-4323 to discuss any matter concerning this application. The Office is authorized to charge any fees related to this communication to Deposit Account No. 11-0600.

Respectfully submitted,

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